

REMARKS

Claims 1, 6, 18, 34, 36, 42, and 69 have been amended. Claims 4 and 7 have been cancelled.

Claims 34, 42, and 69 have been amended to correct grammatical errors.

The specification has been amended to incorporate the cross-reference to the prior applications. This amendment was first requested in the transmittal papers filed with this application on July 15, 2003 (see item 6), but was apparently never entered.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claim 36 stands rejected as indefinite. Claim 36 has been amended to make clear that the streams of steps a-c comprise sodium carbonate, but may also include other components such as sodium bicarbonate (i.e. as an unreacted component, as described on p. 26, lines 8-12). Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claim 1 stands rejected under § 102(b) as anticipated by Copenhafer. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 4, which the Examiner noted would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e)

Claim 1 stands rejected under § 102(e) as anticipated by Copenhafer. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 4, which the Examiner noted would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 15, 17, 22-28, 30, and 32-35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Copenhafer.

Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 4, which the Examiner noted would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Therefore, claim 1 and claims 2, 3, 5, 22, and 27-34 dependent therefrom are in allowable form, and Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 6 has been amended to incorporate the limitations of claim 7. The Examiner noted that claim 7 would be allowable if re-written in independent form. Therefore, claim 6 and claims 8-17, 19, 23-26, and 35 dependent therefrom are in allowable form.

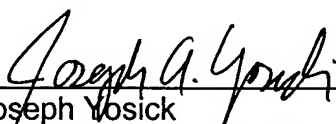
Claim 18 has been re-written in independent form, which the Examiner had indicated would be allowable. Therefore, claims 18, and 20, 21 dependent therefrom, are allowable.

Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as unpatentable over Copenhafer in view of Beard. Claim 3 is dependent on allowable claim 1, and therefore is now allowable.

SUMMARY

Applicants believe the present application is now in condition for allowance. If the Examiner has any remaining issues, he is invited to contact the undersigned attorney for the Applicants via telephone if such communication would expedite this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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